

The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction, and being accredited helps your land trust to stand out, to say to landowners, funders and other supporters: *“Invest in us. We have proven we are a strong, effective organization you can trust to conserve your land forever.”*

See the [2018 report](#) on the impact of ten years of the accreditation program, including a feature [article on the report](#) in the Winter 2019 *Saving Land* magazine.

## WHAT ACCREDITATION MEANS TO LAND TRUSTS

100% of surveyed respondents report that accreditation strengthened their organization, and their organizational and transaction records.

**First-time accreditation makes land trusts **STRONGER**.**



**100%**

report the accreditation process strengthened their land trust



**73%**

report the accreditation process led to a more engaged board



**97%**

have chosen to renew their accreditation

## WHAT ACCREDITATION MEANS TO LAND TRUSTS, DONORS, GOVERNMENT, AND THE PUBLIC

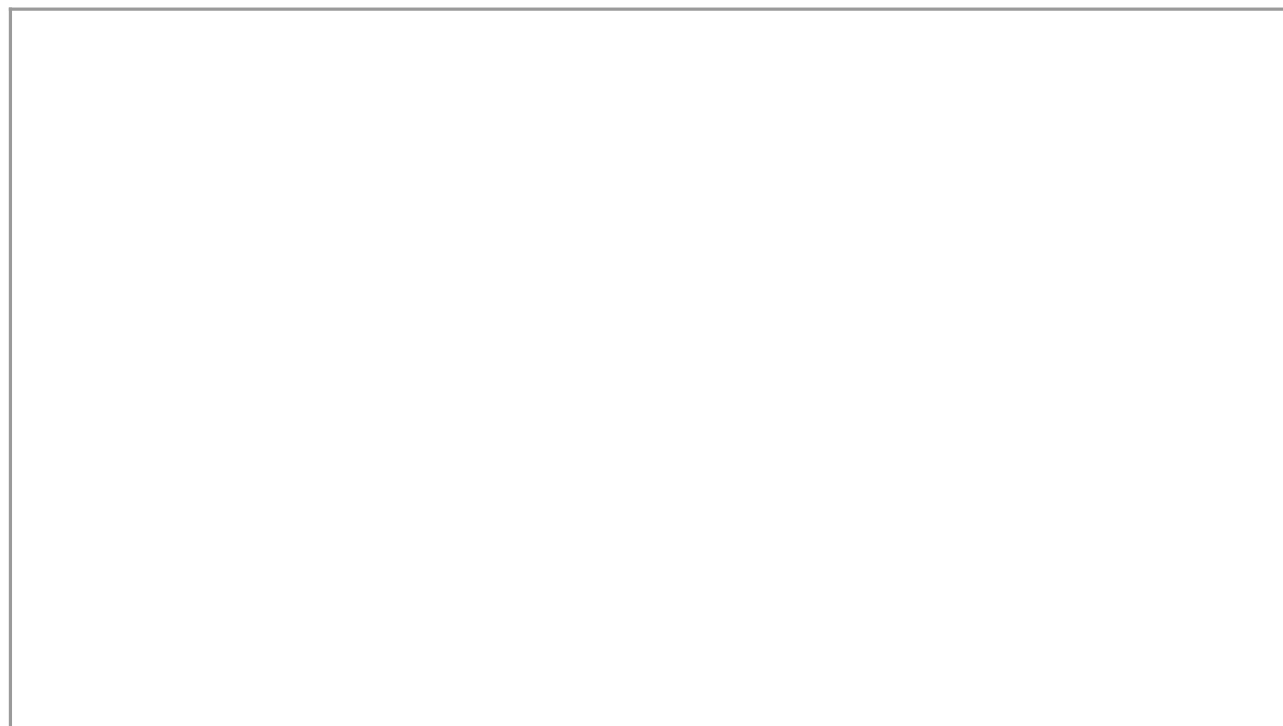
In surveys of accredited and renewed land trusts, 100% report accreditation helps the land trust community maintain the trust of Congress, the Internal Revenue Service, and the public. We have heard numerous land trusts who report of receiving a specific donation or a grant because of their accredited status.

"We are continually amazed at the conservation outcomes resulting from Cornell Land Trust Grant Awards, and the creativity and ingenuity brought to the table by land trusts who strive to attain such commendable stewardship goals. The projects put forth by accredited land trusts have helped us engage donors to significantly scale the grant program and ultimately provide more funding for land trusts who wish to incorporate birds and bird conservation into their land conservation mission."

- Sara Barker, Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative Program Leader, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Being accredited provides your land trust with a number of tangible benefits. We update the list of benefits as we learn of programs using accreditation as a qualifier.

- Download and print [Benefits of Accreditation fact sheet](#).



Listen to Vice President and Northeast Representative Tom Duffus from [The Conservation Fund](#) speak about partnering with accredited land trusts.

[accordion id="a1" heading="State and County benefits to accredited land trusts from across the nation"]

- In Virginia, accredited land trusts are eligible to apply to the Open-Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund for grant funding to purchase lands for conservation purposes. [Learn More](#)
- Automatic eligibility to hold easements with California's Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation Program (supported by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund). [Learn More](#)
- Eligibility in the Forest Conservation Easements for Land Trusts Program. The program is administered by the Land Trust Alliance, in coordination with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The program offers competitive matching grants to qualified New York land trusts to increase the pace of forested land conservation to combat climate changes. [Learn More](#)
- Expedited certification in Colorado when working with landowners desiring a state tax credit for a conservation easement donation. [Learn More](#)
- The Georgia Conservation Tax Credit (GCTC) is a financial incentive for landowners to help protect Georgia's natural resources. Landowners who donate fee-title lands or permanent conservation easements to an accredited land trust may apply for a credit against their state income taxes. [Learn More](#)
- Expedited certification in Louisiana where land trusts must be certified to hold and conserve certain mineral interests. [Learn More](#)
- Exclusive access to funding when leveraging the Buffer Lands Program in Texas for projects near or adjacent to Texas state parks. [Learn More](#)
- Automatic eligibility to apply for funding in Chester County, PA, for its Brandywine Headwaters Preservation Program. [Learn More](#)
- Accredited status gives applicant full points on "Experience and Ability" in New York State for the Regional Economic Development Councils (REDC) and the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) to advance the administration's efforts to improve NY's business climate and expand economic growth. Land trusts can apply for funding for source water protection projects (see page 256 in link). [Learn more](#)
- Washington State Housing Finance Commission, Farm Protection & Affordability Investment (Farm PAI) has a funding opportunity in June 2022. A revolving loan program meant to assist eligible entities in protecting farmland and keep it in production. Funding decision criteria includes evidence of strong organizational conduct and financial capacity of the applicant to develop the project, including a demonstrated track record of receiving anticipated conservation easement funding and repayment of debt, status of accreditation with the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission, and membership in the Washington Association of Land Trusts (WALT). [Learn more](#)

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[accordion id="a2" heading="National and Regional Programs"]

- The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is proactively reaching out to qualified accredited land trusts to become certified entities under the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - Agricultural Land Easements Program (ACEP-ALE). Being a certified entity means a streamlined path for ACEP-ALE which should help get more projects done, protecting more working lands.

### So how does it work?

Entity Certification allows for greater administrative flexibility when participating in ACEP-ALE. Benefits include:

- \*Greater organizational autonomy and streamlined oversight from the NRCS.
- \*An extended initial ACEP-ALE agreement term of up to five years, which can be extended to seven. (In comparison, a non-certified entity ACEP-ALE agreement is three years and can be extended to five.)
- \*A streamlined closing process for ACEP-ALE easements.

### Learn More:

- \*To learn more about eligible entity certification, [please see the Land Trust Alliance's ACEP-ALE Toolkit](#).
- \*[Hear what your accredited colleagues have to say about becoming certified entities in this article](#) by Nikki Nesbary, Senior Manager, NRCS Programs at the Alliance.

- The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has a land trust bird conservation initiative which offers management and restoration grants. For management grants an organization should either be an accredited land trust or be working with an accredited land trust as a partner. Ideally the lead applicant should be the accredited land trust. [Learn More](#)
- Accredited land trusts in New England and Northern New York are eligible to apply for funding through the Wildlands Partnership by the Northeast Wilderness Trust. The Wildlands Partnership aims to increase wildland conservation by uniting accredited land trusts with resources to conserve wild landscapes across the region. In conjunction with protecting well-managed woodlands, the pace of wilderness conservation must accelerate to avoid the worst effects of climate change. [Learn More](#)

- To ensure that the Appalachian region continues to support plants, animals, and people, Open Space Institute (OSI) has launched the Appalachian Landscapes Protection Fund, an \$18 million effort that will provide capital grants to protect 50,000 acres in key focus areas along the Appalachian Range. To complement land protection efforts, OSI's Catalyst Program will work in partnership with states, local communities, Tribes, and land trusts, to reduce climate risks for communities disproportionately affected by flooding and other climate-induced threats. Land Trusts applying for funding must be accredited by the Commission or be on the path to accreditation, as evidenced by a board resolution. [Learn More](#)
- Eligibility in the Land Trust Alliance Forest Carbon Offset Pilot Program requires land trusts who own forest land be accredited—or have validly executed a board resolution committing to pursue accreditation—to participate. [Learn More](#)
- Eligibility in the Land Trust Alliance Avoided Grassland Conversion Carbon Offset Pilot Program requires land trusts who own grasslands, or have conservation easement opportunities on grasslands be accredited—or have validly executed a board resolution committing to pursue accreditation—to participate. [Learn More](#)

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[accordion id="a3" heading="Private Funding Incentives"]

In the past, foundations like the 1772 Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation awarded extra points or increased funding for land trusts who have prioritized accreditation.

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"The Open Space Institute is committed to working with effective and qualified partners in meeting our conservation goals. Land trusts that have been through the accreditation process have been vigorously and thoroughly reviewed. OSI is, therefore, confident that places protected by accredited land trusts, including those supported through our Appalachian Landscapes Protection Fund, will be responsibly executed and the lands well stewarded."

- Jennifer Melville, Vice President of Conservation Grants, Open Space Institute